

Story #289 (Milli Kütüphane Tape)

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The Unkind Mother-in-Law Defeated

Once upon a time there was a mother-in-law who had a sweet daughter-in-law. Every morning, the mother-in-law would get up early. She had a little jar, and she would make some yogurt in it. Every day, she would set some yogurt in the jar.

She was a midwife, this mother-in-law, and before she went out to work she would tell her daughter-in-law not to break the side of the loaf of bread and not to open the lid of the jar. "Otherwise, eat and get fed," she would say, and then leave. But the girl couldn't eat if she didn't break the side of the bread and if she didn't open the lid of the jar.

Every day, the mother-in-law would leave some wool to be spun into yarn. The daughter-in-law would take the bread in her hand, but she wasn't allowed to break the side of it. And she would take up the jar, but she wasn't allowed to open the lid of it. So she couldn't eat anything. She would just work at her spinning wheel all day long, hungry. And this hunger went on for days and days and days, until she couldn't take it any longer.

They had a neighbor, and this neighbor had a daughter, a very, very shrewd sort of person. Every other day she would take a long stick in her hand and she would come to quarrel with them, saying,

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"Your chickens have come and dirtied the side of our pool." One day the daughter-in-law called her and said, "You are shrewd enough. I am no match for my mother-in-law. Maybe you can be. You come and marry my husband [you know, the man can marry more than once] and see if you can match my mother-in-law."

After her husband had got married to the neighbor's girl, every morning the mother-in-law made two jars of yogurt and two loaves of bread and said, "Don't break the side of the bread, and don't open the lid of the yogurt jar. Feed yourselves well and work well." And she left.

Then the shrewd one said, "She told us not to break the side of the bread. Why shouldn't we eat the middle of it?" So they started eating from the middle of one loaf and they made a simit of the bread, leaving the sides of it all around. And they passed it over the bottom of the yogurt jar (an earthen jar) and caused the yogurt to pour through the hole, and they ate the yogurt with the bread.

When the mother-in-law came in the evening, she knew it was the deed of the new wife. The older one had no tricks of the sort.

The older daughter-in-law said, "God be pleased with you! I was hungry all day long. At least now it's half of a loaf that I can have."

One day the new one said, "Come, sister. Let's make ourselves some helva."

"Oh, no!" said the first one. "That witch of a mother-in-law will make a hell of our lives for that."

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But they made some helva, anyway, and right when they were ready to sit down and eat it, the door opened and the mother-in-law came in.

When the two girls saw the mother-in-law coming, the older one

"Oh, she's coming! I'm afraid she's coming!"

And the younger one said, "Don't be worried. I'll fix it." She got a square piece of cloth [to wrap clothes in--a bohça] and she put a loaf of bread in it and she put some helva in it, too, and she rolled and tied it around her waist.

When the mother-in-law came in, both the daughters-in-law helped her out of her heavy clothing and they made her sit in the corner. And the younger daughter-in-law said, "Do you want me to dance for you and entertain you?"

"Yes," said the mother-in-law.

Then the younger one turned to the older one and said, "You sing I dance, will you?"

So the older one began to sing,

Oh, sister, sister!

If it's found out, it's hell--it's hell!

If it's not found out, it's the road to freedom.

And the younger one answered,

Don't be afraid, sister.

The rope is strong.

Don't be afraid, sister.

The rope is strong.

(She had tied the cloth around her waist with a rope.)

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The mother-in-law could not find out anything, because the helva was hidden around her waist.

So they went up on the roof. [On the roofs of mud houses there is a round stone, cylindrical, and after each rain they roll it on the roof to smooth the roof so the water will not leak through. In the villages you can see these stones if you look. It's called a lo taşı, a lo stone.] She said, "We're going to roll the lo taşı to the very edge of the roof. As soon as our mother-in-law comes by the door, we're going to let it down. We'll tie a rope to the lo stone and pass it through the chimney."

She held the other end of the rope, and as soon as the mother-in-law was by the door, she let it go. It rolled down on the mother-in-law and made her as flat as pastille, and she died. The others lived happily from then on.